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Jewel Cave National Monument News Release

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Jewel Cave Plans for Construction

Custer, SD – Jewel Cave National Monument is preparing for multiple construction projects this spring. Highway 16, which travels through the monument, is slated for work in coming weeks, and the visitor center parking lot is planned for improvements over the next few months.

The South Dakota Department of Transportation is currently staging equipment in the area near Jewel Cave. Once the road right of way agreement has been secured with the Federal Highway Administration, roadwork is planned for early to mid-March . Travelers may experience some delays along Highway 16 during the project. Acting Superintendent Bradley Block states, "We appreciate all of the efforts of our partner agency. The South Dakota DOT has done a wonderful job of communicating their plans with the monument. They have been working in collaboration with the National Park Service to ensure the protection of our natural and cultural resources, preserve the aesthetic values of the landscape, and provide for public safety."

The visitor center parking lot is also planned for construction this spring and early summer. Using project funds from the NPS Line Item Construction Program, the new lot is designed to filter out potential contaminants and prevent them from entering the cave. It also offers improved safety features for pedestrians and enhances visitor experiences with more picnic areas.

For the safety of visitors, staff, and work crews, as well as to expedite the parking lot project, Jewel Cave will remain closed on weekends through March and possibly through mid-April. Block further comments, "Weather permitting, we are hopeful that the parking lot project will be completed before the summer season, which would allow for improved visitor services. Although we realize that our spring schedule will not satisfy every visitor, we are optimistic that our support with the on-site work crews will help prepare the monument to stay on target with its overall summer programming schedule."

Due to both construction projects, advanced tour reservations are not being taken for the Discovery, Scenic, and Historic Lantern Tours. Except for the Wild Caving Tour, all cave tour tickets are being sold on a first come first serve basis. Block states, "With pending delays along Highway 16 and changes with the parking lot, we simply cannot guarantee that visitors will arrive in time for their reserved tour. For this reason, first come first serve tours create equal opportunities for everyone and eliminates a host of internal and external logistical concerns."

For information relating to the planned summer tour schedule, visit Jewel Cave online at www.nps.gov/jeca and select the link for Operating Hours and Seasons. The visitor center is currently open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Visitors are also welcome to request information by sending an email to jeca_interpretation@nps.gov.

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